

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the matter of

Amendment of Section 73.622 of the Rules
Table of Allotments, Digital Television
Broadcast Stations
(Macon, Georgia)

MM Docket No. 01-1 /
RM-10013

To: Chief, Video Services Division

REPLY COMMENTS OF MACON URBAN MINISTRIES, INC.

Macon Urban Ministries, Inc., d/b/a Good News Television, licensee of television broadcast station WGNM, Channel 64, Macon, Georgia, and applicant (File No. BPCDT-19991029AFL) for a construction permit for a new digital television broadcast station on Channel 50, through counsel, submits these brief Reply Comments concerning the counterproposal in this proceeding by the Georgia Public Telecommunications Commission ("GPTC"). GPTC asks the FCC to allot DTV Channel 4 to Athens, Georgia, as the paired DTV allotment for noncommercial educational television station WGTU-TV, Athens, rather than to Macon as the paired DTV allotment for WMAZ-TV, Channel 13, Macon, licensed to Gannett Georgia, L.P. ("Gannett"), as proposed in the FCC's *Notice of Proposed Rule Making*, DA 01-01, released January 5, 2001.

Good News Television filed its own counterproposal. While Gannett proposed the deletion of Channel 45, WMAZ-TV's current paired DTV channel, from the Table of DTV Allotments at Macon, Good News Television proposed substituting Channel 45 for Channel 50 as the paired DTV allotment for WGNM. As set forth in Good News Television's Comments and Counterproposal,

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substituting Channel 45 for Channel 50 would permit WGNM-DT to operate nondirectionally rather than with the directional antenna required by the Channel 50 allotment, serve 75,000 more people, and reduce interference and potential interference to an NTSC station at Opelika, Alabama, and DTV stations on Channel 50 at Bainbridge, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama, and on Channel 51 at Cordele, Georgia. Concomitantly, the elimination of those interference considerations would permit improvements in the facilities of those three DTV stations.

Taken together, Gannett's and Good News Television's proposals would permit two new digital television stations to provide more service, reduce interference or the potential for interference to at least four other stations, and allow improvements in the facilities of three DTV stations. The GPTC counterproposal, on the other hand, would benefit only WGTB-DT. In addition, its adoption would prevent the FCC from substituting Channel 45 for Channel 50 as the paired DTV allotment for WGNM and preclude realization of the other public interest benefits that would follow from adoption of Good News Television's counterproposal. The much greater public interest benefit that would accrue from the grant of both Gannett's and Good News Television's proposals, therefore, requires rejection of the GPTC counterproposal.

GPTC claims (Counterproposal, pp. 3-4) that operating WGTB-DT on Channel 4 would reduce costs and advance GPTC's goal of providing Internet access to more Georgia residents. But those claims do not distinguish GPTC's situation from that of Gannett, Good News Television, or any of hundreds of other television stations facing the transition to DTV. Virtually every television licensee is faced with substantial financial burdens in making the DTV transition and contemplates the provision of broadband services in addition to high-definition and standard definition programming. Virtually every television station, therefore, could cite the same or substantially similar

benefits from moving its DTV operation to a low-band VHF channel. If the FCC were to accept GPTC's argument, the result would be creation of a new hierarchy of digital television stations, with State-operated networks at the top.

Neither does GPTC have an especially compelling claim to relief from the costs of the DTV transition. WGTV-TV is part of Georgia Public Broadcasting ("GPB"), a network of nine noncommercial educational television stations and 14 noncommercial educational radio stations in Georgia. According to published reports and publicly-available material, GPB's 1999 budget was \$31 million. Of its 1997 budget, more than \$17.3 million came from the State of Georgia. GPB operates from a state-of-the art digital production facility in Atlanta that cost approximately \$45 million to construct.¹ According to GPTC's Public Telecommunications Facilities grant application, it anticipates expenditures of over \$18 million in converting its television stations to digital broadcasting. In other words, GPTC's resources dwarf those of many medium and small market television licensees, including Good News Television.

Accordingly, Good News Television strongly opposes the GPTC counterproposal. Should the FCC, for reasons not apparent on the face of the GPTC counterproposal, depart from the traditional criteria for evaluating competing allotment proposals and assign Channel 4 to Athens, Channel 22, currently assigned to WGTV-TV, would become available for assignment with 800 kW effective radiated power at Macon. As set forth in the attached Engineering Statement from Good News Television's consulting engineers, du Treil, Lundin & Rackley, Inc., operating on Channel 22, even with less ERP than proposed in its pending construction permit application for Channel 50 or permitted by the Channel 45 allotment currently assigned to Gannett, WGNM-DT could broadcast

¹ *Current*, June 7, 1999 (available on-line at <http://www.current.org/pb/pb910g.html>).

nondirectionally and serve more area and more people than it currently proposes to serve on Channel 50 (although not as much as possible if operating on Channel 45).²

For the foregoing reasons, the FCC should reject the GPTC Counterproposal. However, if it does not, it should substitute Channel 22 for Channel 50 in the Table of DTV Allotments at Macon, Georgia, and assign the new channel to WGNM-DT.

Respectfully submitted,

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March 13, 2001

² Specifically, according to the Engineering Statement, WGNM-DT, operating on Channel 22 with ERP of 800 kW at 223 meters above average terrain, would provide noise-limited service (i.e., the 41 dBu contour) to 599,608 persons within an area of 21,433 square kilometers. This area exceeds the current WGNM analog service area and the population that would be served is nearly 51,000 people more than would be served by WGNM-DT operating as proposed in File No. BPCDT-19991029AFL.

ENGINEERING STATEMENT
COMMENTS IN RM-10013
MM DOCKET NO. 01-01
GOOD NEWS TELEVISION
MACON, GEORGIA

This engineering statement was prepared on behalf of Good News Television, licensee of television station WGNM Macon, Georgia. In MM Docket No. 01-01, Good News filed comments requesting allotment of DTV channel 45 to WGNM, if the DTV channel allotment for WMAZ-TV Macon, Georgia, is changed from 45 to 4. Comments were also filed by Georgia Public Telecommunications Commission ("GPTC"), licensee of television station WGTV-TV Athens, Georgia. GPTC proposes replacing WGTV-TV's channel 22 DTV allotment with channel 4. Channel 4 cannot be employed at both Macon and Athens.

In the WGNM comments, it was shown that substitution of DTV channel 45 for existing DTV channel 50 would provide more service and eliminate potential interference with an NTSC channel 50 station proposed at Opelika, Alabama; WTLH-DT Bainbridge, GA (channel 50); WBRC-DT Birmingham, AL (channel 50) and WSST-DT Cordele, GA (channel 51). In addition, the reallocation of channel 45 to WGNM in lieu of channel 50 would permit potential expansion of the facilities of these DTV stations on channels 50 and 51.

In the event that the Commission finds it in the public interest to allot DTV channel 4 to WGTV-TV, Good News requests re-arrangement of the DTV Table of Allotments to

du Treil, Lundin & Rackley, Inc.

Consulting Engineers

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substitute DTV channel 22 at Macon, GA in place of channel 50, and to delete the allotment of channel 22 at Athens, GA. WGNM operating with omni-directional facility having effective radiated power of 800 kilowatts with antenna height above average terrain of 223 meters, at 32-45-51 North Latitude, 83-33-32 West Longitude, no objectionable interference would be given to any DTV or analog stations. With this facility, noise-limited service would be provided to 599,608 persons (1990 census) in an area of 21,433 square kilometers. The channel 22 DTV facilities would have coverage exceeding the current WGNM analog service area.

To summarize, Good News Television request allotment of DTV channel 45 in lieu of 50, if DTV channel 4 is substituted for WMAZ-TV's DTV channel 45. If DTV channel 4 is allotted to WGTW-TV, Good News requests substitution of DTV channel 22 for channel 50, and deletion of the DTV channel 22 allotment at Athens, Georgia.



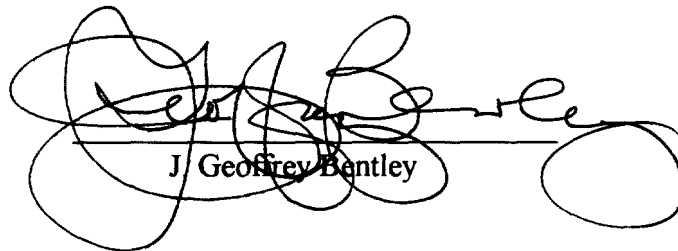
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March 12, 2001

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I caused a copy of the foregoing Reply Comments to be served this 13th day of March 2001, by first-class United States mail, postage prepaid, on the persons listed below.



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